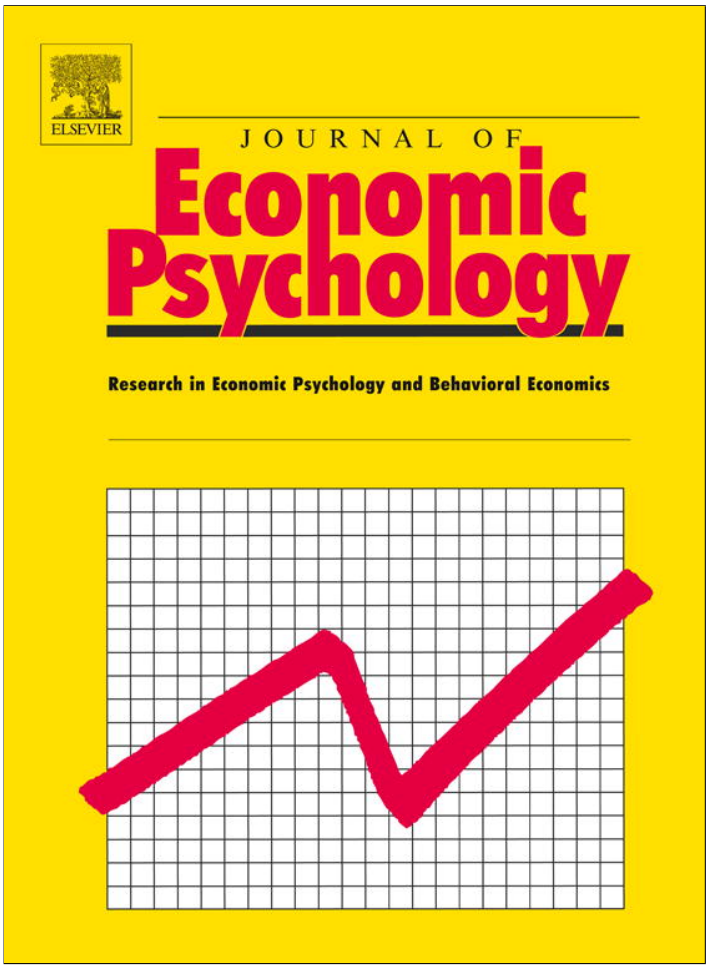
Preference reversal for copycat brands: Uncertainty makes imitation feel good

Van Horen, F.; Pieters, R.

published in
Journal of Economic Psychology
2013

DOI (link to publisher)
10.1016/j.joep.2013.05.003



Journal of Economic Psychology 37 (2013) 54–64

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

Journal of Economic Psychology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/joep

Preference reversal for copycat brands: Uncertainty makes imitation feel good

Femke Van Horen [a,*], Rik Pieters [b,1]

[a] University of Cologne, Department of Social Psychology, Richard-Strauss-Strasse 2, 50931 Cologne, Germany
[b] Tilburg Institute of Behavioral and Economics Research (TIBER), Tilburg University, P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 26 October 2012
Received in revised form 12 April 2013
Accepted 15 May 2013
Available online 24 May 2013

JEL classification:
M31

PsycINFO classification:
3920

Keywords:
Preference reversal
Copycat brands
Imitation
Uncertainty
Decision-making

ABSTRACT

Copycat brands try to entice consumers by imitating the trade-dress of leading brands. Recent research suggests that preferences for copycat brands relative to more differentiated brands are generally lower. That is, consumers tend to dislike such "imitation" brands, because of psychological reactance. Three experiments provide evidence in support of the counter hypothesis that preferences for copycats, rather than being generally negative, critically depend on consumers' uncertainty. When uncertainty about product quality is low, people dislike copycat brands, but this preference reverses when uncertainty is high – despite awareness of the imitation tactics being used. We speculate that this preference reversal occurs because the familiar feel of the copycat is interpreted positively when being uncertain, but negatively when being certain. This double-edged effect of brand similarity has implications for preference theory, consumer decision-making, and managerial practice.

1. Introduction

Imagine being on a holiday abroad looking for an energy drink. All brands in the store are unknown, which creates uncertainty about their quality. One brand, however, looks familiar, because of its high similarity in package design with the Red Bull energy drink, although it is clearly not that brand. When Red Bull is unavailable, what is the likelihood that you will buy this copycat brand and not an equally attractive-looking other brand that is visually differentiated from the Red Bull energy drink? Now imagine that you are back home where all brands are well known to you. When Red Bull is unavailable, what is the likelihood that you now will buy the copycat brand rather than the visually differentiated brand?

Copycat brands imitate a leading brand to make use of the latter's brand equity. Copycatting is a widespread branding strategy that can erode the long-term investments in leading brands thereby incurring major financial losses (Zaichkowsky, 2006; Mitchell & Kearney, 2002). Sayman, Hoch, and Raju (2002) even reported package imitation in one third of the 75 consumer packaged goods categories that they researched. It is thus important to understand the drivers of consumers' preferences for copycat brands. These are not yet well understood, which was the impetus of the present study.

The success of copycatting is often attributed to brand confusion. In case of brand confusion, people positively evaluate the copycat because they confuse it with the original brand (Howard, Kerin, & Gengler, 2000; Kapferer, 1995; Loken, Ross, &

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 221 4701525; fax: +49 221 4701216.
E-mail addresses: fvhoren@uni-koeln.de (F. Van Horen), f.g.m.pieters@uvt.nl (R. Pieters).
[1] Tel.: +31 13 4663256.

0167-4870/$ - see front matter © 2013 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2013.05.003

Hinkle, 1986; Simonson, 1994). The degree of brand confusion is also a major metric in court cases to determine whether unlawful copycatting has taken place (Zaichkowsky, 2006). Yet, people are often fully aware that an imitation strategy is being used and do not mistake the similar looking brand for the original, such as in the opening example about the choice of an energy drink. In such cases, copycatting is blatant and upfront, and without any confusion between the original and the copycatting brand. What is the effect of such blatant copycatting on consumer preferences?

Recent research has provided evidence that such copycats are evaluated negatively, because of psychological reactance to imitation (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2013; Van Horen & Pieters, 2012a, 2012b; Warlop & Alba, 2004). But does this mean that people generally dislike blatant copycats? The present research challenges this idea. It tests the hypothesis that copycat evaluation critically depends on uncertainty about product quality. We predict that when uncertainty about product quality is low, people dislike copycat brands, but that this preference reverses when uncertainty is high, despite awareness of the imitation tactics being used. We speculate that this is due to the fundamentally different role that feelings of familiarity induced by the copycat play in the evaluation process. When uncertainty is low, the feelings of familiarity that copycat brands induce have negative effects, yet when uncertainty is high, the familiar feel of copycat brands have positive effects.

Support for this idea would imply that uncertainty induces preference reversals for copycat brands. This would provide new insights into how contextual factors – such as uncertainty – influence evaluation and choice processes of consumers. It would reveal that, counter to the idea that feelings of familiarity have universally positive effects (Whittlesea, 1993; Winkielman, Schwarz, Fazendeiro, & Reber, 2003) these effects are conditional upon contextual factors, such as uncertainty. This might enable better predictions about the potential success of copycat brands and more informed decisions by consumers and managers when dealing with them. The next section provides the theory on which our predictions rest. Then, the findings of three controlled studies that test the predictions are presented.

1.1. Effectiveness of copycatting

Copycats imitate the name, logo, and/or package design of a leading brand to take advantage of the latter's positive associations and marketing efforts (Foxman, Muehling, & Berger, 1990; Kapferer, 1995; Loken et al., 1986; Simonson, 1994; Zaichkowsky, 2006). Copycatting is a deliberate and frequently used strategy. A survey in the United States showed for instance that half of the store brands were similar to a leader brand package at least in color, size, and shape (Scott-Morton & Zettelmeyer, 2004, see also Sayman et al., 2002). Imitation strategies can be effective as they activate associations that remind consumers of something they know (i.e., the leader brand), which feels familiar, fluent, and pleasant (Jacoby, Kelley, Brown, & Jasechko, 1989; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982). Then, the positive evaluations associated with the leader brand are likely to become infused into the representation of the copycat brand, resulting in positive copycat evaluation. This occurs in particular when the copycatting is done subtly, and the imitation is not obvious and blatant.

Recent research has demonstrated that when the imitation is very obvious and blatant, however, copycat evaluation is negative instead of positive (Van Horen & Pieters, 2012a, 2012b; Steenkamp & Geijskens, 2013; Warlop & Alba, 2004). Van Horen and Pieters showed, for instance, across various product categories and imitation tactics (brand name, packaging), that people preferred a more differentiated brand to a copycat brand when the similarity to the leader brand was high and comparison was made easy. Then, people were especially likely to become aware of the high resemblance with the leader brand, which heightens consumers' awareness of the imitation practices employed. Such obvious imitation attempts are perceived as unacceptable and inappropriate, which induces psychological reactance (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Wegener & Petty, 1995), resulting in a negative evaluation of the blatant copycat.

Thus, this recent research stream suggests that when copycats are blatant and consumers are aware of the imitation tactics being used, copycats are disliked. But are blatant copycats always disliked? Blatant copycats are common, and the question is why they persist, if they could never be successful. Remarkably, research has not yet considered the potential influence of contextual factors in the evaluation process of such copycats, even though these factors are known to condition people's preferences and choice (Huber, Payne, & Puto, 1982; Meloy & Russo, 2004). Here, we investigate one such contextual factor – the uncertainty consumers face in a shopping situation. We propose that the evaluation and choice of blatant copycats is critically dependent on the uncertainty of quality elicited by the decision context. More specifically, we predict that in an uncertain context people *like* – instead of *dislike* – blatant copycats.

1.2. Coping with uncertainty

Consumers make purchase decisions with varying degrees of uncertainty about the quality of the alternatives that are being offered. Such uncertainty of product quality is predominant in unfamiliar settings, where consumers have no knowledge of the brands that are on the market, how they perform, and how they compare to other brands (Downey & Slocum, 1975; Howell & Burnett, 1978; Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997). Situations of uncertainty induce unpleasant feelings and these prompt coping responses to reduce them (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Loewenstein, 1994). Search for additional information, such as through advice seeking, product- and store comparison, or sampling, can sometimes reduce uncertainty (Dowling & Staelin, 1994; Urbany, Dickson, & Wilkie, 1989).

When time is limited and there is little opportunity to extensively search for information and compare alternatives, consumers are however likely to search for simple, low-effort cues to assess quality in order to reduce uncertainty. Such quality cues reside, for instance, in the price, packaging, and brand name of a product (Dawar & Parker, 1994; Kirmani & Rao, 2000).

Studies about the effects of uncertainty on cue-utilization have shown that consumers rely heavily on cues like the brand name (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991) and prefer established brands to alternatives, even when the established brands are inferior on other product attributes (Muthukrishnan, Wathieu, & Xu, 2009). Furthermore, when consumers are in an situation in which they have no knowledge of the brands that are available and how these perform, they are likely to make inferences about missing quality information, and may use similarity to known brands for this (Ross & Creyer, 1992).

An "internal,' feelings-based heuristic that people may use to guide their decision-making under uncertainty is "feeling of familiarity" (Jacoby, Kelley, & Dywan, 1989; Jacoby, Kelley, & Brown, 1989; Whittlesea, 1993). A feeling of familiarity is typically obtained from stimuli one is repeatedly exposed to (Zajonc, 1968). Due to frequent exposure, these stimuli are processed more fluently (i.e., easy, efficient, and conflict-free), which increases positive affect and results in more favorable evaluations (Schwarz, 2004; Winkielman et al., 2003). This "warm glow of familiarity" is particularly desired under conditions of uncertainty, apprehension, and stress (De Vries, Holland, Chenier, Starr, & Winkielman, 2010; Litt, Reich, Maymin, & Shiv, 2011), as it signals safety and security. These psychological processes have implications for copycat evaluation in uncertain and certain contexts.

1.3. Copycats as uncertainty-reducing devices

When the situational context induces uncertainty about product quality, a copycat is likely to serve as an effective uncertainty-reducing device. Its similarity in package design will remind consumers of something known (i.e., the leader brand) and the associated warm glow of familiarity feels good to consumers who are uncertain. Besides this warm feeling, familiarity will be used as a cue for product quality. Then, similarity in package design will be used to infer similarity of quality, performance, and reliability (Collins-Dodd & Zaichkowsky, 1999; Ward, Loken, Ross, & Hasapopoulos, 1986). These processes raise the evaluation of the copycat. We argue that this will even be the case when copycats are blatant and consumers are aware that a copycat strategy is being used, as feelings of familiarity will infuse and dominate decision-making (Whittlesea, 1993). Then, people *knowingly* choose a copycat.

When consumers feel however certain about the quality of products, familiar feelings induced by similarity in package design might be interpreted negatively instead of positively. Research demonstrated that the familiar-positivity link is valued in uncertain and unsafe contexts, but less so in certain and safe contexts (Bornstein, 1989; Jacoby, Kelley, & Dywan, 1989). Under negative mood, which signals an unsafe environment, people preferred familiar category prototypes, whereas in a happy mood, which signals a safe and secure environment, these effects were eliminated (De Vries et al., 2010). Likewise, in a strange, unknown environment a blatant copycat might elicit a warm glow, whereas in a well-known setting the same copycat may cause a frown. When consumers are certain and aware that an imitation strategy is being used, similarity may be perceived as an intentional ploy to mislead consumers about quality (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Friestad & Wright, 1994; Warlop & Alba, 2004). Then, consumers may correct for the positive feelings stemming from similarity (Martin, 1986; Van Horen & Pieters, 2012a, 2012b). A copycat may then be seen as just an "impersonator", and familiarity might feel bad, instead of good, resulting in a negative evaluation.

1.4. Overview of the experiments

Three experiments test the novel hypothesis that evaluation of a copycat critically depends on contextually induced uncertainty. More specifically, we predict that copycats will be evaluated less positively and chosen less often when consumers are certain about product quality, but that this preference reverses when people are uncertain. The evaluation of the blatant copycat is tested against the evaluation of a visually differentiated product, serving as a control. This hypothesis is tested in two different decision contexts.

As the focus is on uncertainty of product quality, which is predominant in unfamiliar settings where consumers have no knowledge of the brands that are available (Downey & Slocum, 1975; Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997), Experiment 1 examines a common consumer context that is likely to induce uncertainty about product quality – being abroad. Such uncertainty-inducing context is expected to increase the appeal of something that feels familiar, which will direct consumers' judgment and choice of copycats. Experiment 2 replicates the basic effect and rules out that a country/expertise explanation accounts for the findings of Experiment 1. In Experiment 3, instead of manipulating uncertainty in an indirect way by varying the decision context (being abroad versus being at home), uncertainty is manipulated in a different and more direct way to provide further support for the idea that uncertainty is the catalyst of the effects. Finally, in the discussion we speculate and provide initial evidence for the underlying process and discuss the implications for preference formation theory and marketing practice. Across experiments, different product categories are used to demonstrate the generalizability of the results. Support for our hypothesis would point to the importance of contextual effects on copycat evaluation and show how different contexts result in different preferences.

2. Experiment 1

Experiment 1 examines how uncertainty of product quality modulates the evaluation of copycats by changing the context in which copycat evaluation takes place. When people visit a foreign country, for work or pleasure, they are often unacquainted with the various product categories and available brands. Uncertainty about the choice alternatives and their

quality is likely to be high in such an unfamiliar setting. When being at home (a familiar setting), uncertainty is however likely to be low. We predict that copycats will be preferred to visually differentiated brands when feeling uncertain, but that visually differentiated brands will be preferred to copycats when feeling certain. Additionally, this experiment rules out the possibility that source confusion (misidentifying the copied brand for the actual brand) accounts for the effects and demonstrates that the effect appears despite consumers' awareness of the imitation tactics being used.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants and design

Fifty-seven (32 men, age $M = 20.65$, $SD = 2.23$) paid Dutch undergraduate students participated. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (imitation: no, yes) $\times$ 2 (condition: uncertain (abroad), certain (at home)) mixed design, with imitation as within-participant factor and condition as between-participants factor. One foreign student (being a native speaker is crucial in view of the at-home and abroad scenarios and the stimulus material) was excluded from the analyses leaving $N = 56$.

2.1.2. Stimuli

Starbucks was chosen as the leader brand, as it is an international, well-known brand of coffee shops and its logo is unique and easily recognizable. An existing copycat logo that showed high similarity with the logo of the Starbucks coffee chain (USABUCKS) was selected together with a logo that showed very little to almost no similarity with the Starbucks logo (COFFEE EXPRESS, see Fig. 1). Both logos were unknown to the participants.

A pre-test with a separate sample ($N = 42$, between-participants) revealed that the visually differentiated logo was judged to be much less similar to the original Starbucks logo ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.90$), than the copycat logo was ($M = 8.29$, $SD = .90$), $t(40) = -10.89$, $p < .001$. It also revealed that the visually differentiated logo and the copycat logo were (aesthetically) equally attractive ($M_{Diff} = 6.62$, $SD = 1.36$; $M_{Copy} = 6.48$, $SD = 1.78$, on a nine-point scale), $t(40) = .29$, $p = .77$. This rules out that the hypothesized evaluation effects in the main study are due to a simple aesthetic attractiveness effect. Furthermore, both logos were thought to fit equally well in the product category "coffee shops" ($M_{Diff} = 7.19$, $SD = 1.63$; $M_{Copy} = 6.76$, $SD = 1.67$), $t(40) = .84$, $p = .41$.

2.1.3. Procedure and measures

Participation was individual on personal computers in a consumer lab. Participants were asked to evaluate coffee shops. First, several logos of coffee shop chains, including the logo of Starbucks, were shortly presented to ensure equal familiarity of the logos among participants. Then, participants read a scenario. In the uncertain condition (foreign country), they imagined working for an international company, having been sent on a business trip to Bejing, China. They read: "After your working day, you are looking for a place to sit down and have a coffee. In a street nearby you see the logos of two different coffee shops. Now take a few moments to imagine being in Bejing, a city you have not been to before. The products are unknown to you and you do not know what their quality will be like." In the certain condition (home country), participants read the same scenario, but were asked to imagine looking for a coffee shop in their hometown; a town they knew very well and where the products and their quality were known.

After participants had imagined the situation, the copycat logo and then the visually differentiated logo were displayed on the computer screen. Participants evaluated the logos on two semantic differential items with nine-point response alternatives (*negative-positive, uninteresting-interesting*), indicated their willingness to go to each of the two coffee shops (1 *definitely not* to 9 *definitely yes*), and were asked to choose one of the coffee shops to have a coffee. The evaluation and the willingness to buy items were highly correlated (respective inter-item correlations .79 and .65, $ps < .001$) and collapsed into a single evaluation measure. To assess potential "source confusion," participants were asked to indicate whether they thought the shops were part of the Starbucks chain (1 *definitely not* to 9 *definitely yes*; Howard et al., 2000).

Fig. 1. Stimuli Used in Experiment 1 and 2.

Then, as reading and manipulation checks, participants indicated in which country their scenario was situated (all were correct), whether they felt uncertain about the quality of products in the target country they were in (1 *definitely not* to 9 *definitely yes*), and whether they were aware of the imitation strategy being used (''Do you think the coffee shop logo looks too much alike the Starbucks logo from 1 *definitely not* to 9 *definitely yes*).

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Manipulation checks

As intended, participants felt more uncertain about the quality of the products in the foreign country than in the home condition: $M_{Foreign}$ = 6.23, SD = 2.14; M_{Home} = 4.46, SD = 1.82, $F(1, 54) = 10.94$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. Also, for the awareness measure, a repeated measures ANOVA revealed, as intended, a main effect of imitation, $F(1, 53) = 170.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .76$, but no main effect of country, $F(1, 53) = 0.51$, $p = .48$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$ and no interaction between imitation and country, $F(1, 53) = 1.66$, $p = .21$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. In addition, the simple main effect test showed as expected, that participants were *equally* aware of the imitation strategy of the copycat logo in the foreign country as in the home condition: $M_{Foreign}$ = 7.23, SD = 1.90; M_{Home} = 7.92, SD = 2.19, $F(1, 54) = 1.56$, $p = .22$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

2.2.2. Evaluation

A repeated measures ANOVA revealed no main effect of imitation, $F(1, 54) = 0.11$, $p = .75$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, and of condition, $F(1, 54) = 0.81$, $p = .37$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. However, it did reveal the hypothesized significant interaction between imitation and condition, $F(1, 54) = 10.41$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$ (see Fig. 2). Indeed, the copycat logo was evaluated more positively in the uncertain condition (foreign country, M = 6.88, SD = 1.38), than in the certain condition (home country, M = 5.74, SD = 1.44), $F(1, 54) = 9.15$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$. In the uncertain condition, the coffee shop with the copycat logo was evaluated more positively, than the coffee shop with the visually differentiated logo (M = 6.07, SD = 1.65), $F(1, 54) = 4.53$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. In the certain condition the copycat logo was evaluated more negatively, than the visually differentiated logo (M = 6.74, SD = 1.20), $F(1, 54) = 5.89$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$. This shows the preference reversal due to uncertainty.

2.2.3. Choice

Because participants evaluated both choice options and then chose one of them, a conditional logit, discrete choice model was estimated (Long, 1997). As hypothesized and consistent with the results on evaluation, a significant interaction between imitation and condition emerged, $\beta = 2.05$, $z = 3.35$, $p = .001$ (see Fig. 2). Again, in the uncertain condition (foreign country), the probability of choosing the coffee shop with the copycat logo was higher (70%), than the probability of choosing the coffee shop with the visually differentiated logo (30%), $\beta = 0.85$, $z = 2.13$, $p = .03$. Yet, in the certain condition (home country), the probability of choosing the copycat coffee shop was lower (23%), than the probability of choosing the visually differentiated coffee shop (77%), $\beta = -1.20$, $z = -2.59$, $p = .01$.

2.2.4. Source confusion

A follow-up repeated-measures ANOVA ruled out that these effects are due to source confusion, i.e., the belief that the same manufacturer produces the copycat brand and the leader brand. It revealed a main effect of imitation, $F(1, 54) = 33.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .38$, but no main effect of country, $F(1, 54) = 0.74$, $p = .39$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and no interaction effect between imitation and country, $F(1, 54) = 0.08$, $p = .77$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Source confusion was low in general and there was no difference between the foreign and home condition for the copycat logo (M_{Foreign} = 5.10, SD = 2.63 and M_{Home} = 4.62, SD = 2.65), $F(1, 54) = 0.47$, $p = .50$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

The findings support the hypothesis that copycat evaluation critically depends on the feelings of uncertainty elicited by the context. Replicating earlier findings, a copycat is evaluated less positively and chosen less often than a visually differentiated product when feeling certain about product quality (i.e., at home). However, when people are uncertain about product

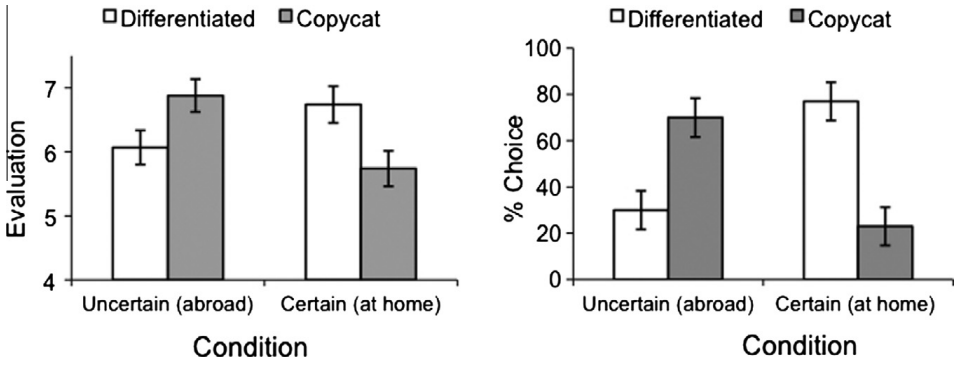


Fig. 2. Experiment 1: Influence of Imitation and Condition (Uncertain (Foreign Country) versus Certain (Home Country)) on Evaluation and Choice. *Note*: Error bars indicate ± one standard error of the mean.

quality (i.e., when being abroad), a copycat is evaluated *more* positively and chosen *more* often than a visually differentiated product. When feeling uncertain, people like blatant copycats even when they are as aware of the imitation tactics being used as in the certain condition. The effect could not be explained by source confusion.

Despite the evidence, there might be an alternative explanation for the findings as well. As China is generally not well-known for producing coffee, participants may have evaluated a coffee from a coffee shop with a logo that refers to the Western world more positively, than from a coffee shop that does not refer to this. Then, instead of a copycat effect, the results would be due to a country/expertise effect. Experiment 2 addresses this issue, and examines the generalizability of the findings of Experiment 1.

3. Experiment 2

The set up of Experiment 2 was the same as of Experiment 1 with one crucial difference. Here, two countries were selected that both induced uncertainty about product quality (as people were unacquainted with the country and thus did not have any knowledge of the brands and how they perform), but differed in their coffee production expertise. When the results of Experiment 1 are due to a country/expertise effect, an interaction between imitation and country would be expected. When the results are instead, as we argue, caused by a copycat effect, a main effect is expected to emerge and the copycat logo should be evaluated more positively, independent of country.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Selection of country

To select two countries that induce equally high levels of uncertainty of the general quality of the products within the country, but differ significantly on coffee production expertise, a separate sample of 20 undergraduate students was asked to indicate their uncertainty about the quality of the products in Indonesia, China, Guatemala, Colombia, and Mexico (1 *very low* to 9 *very high*) and to indicate whether they perceived these countries as experts of coffee production (1 *definitely not* to 9 *definitely yes*). Results showed that participants felt equally uncertain about the quality of products in Colombia and China (M_{China} = 6.05, SD = 1.67 and $M_{Columbia}$ = 5.70, SD = 1.49), $F(1, 19) = 0.92$, $p = .35$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (other countries: $M_{Guatamala}$ = 5.95, SD = 1.54; $M_{Indonesia}$ = 5.30, SD = 1.69; M_{Mexico} = 5.70, SD = 1.72), but did perceive Colombia to be more of a coffee expert (M = 7.15, SD = 1.63) than China (M_{China} = 4.60, SD = 1.50), $F(1, 19) = 19.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .51$ (the other countries scored in between: $M_{Guatamala}$ = 6.60, SD = 1.73; $M_{Indonesia}$ = 6.30, SD = 1.22; M_{Mexico} = 5.65, SD = 1.76). Thus, Colombia and China were selected for the main study.

3.1.2. Participants and design

Forty-one (17 men, age M = 20.88, SD = 2.10) Dutch undergraduate students participated. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (imitation: no, yes) × 2 (country: China, Colombia) mixed design, with imitation as within-participant factor and country as between-participants factor. Three foreign students were excluded from the analyses (see Experiment 1), leaving N = 38.

3.1.3. Procedure and measures

The procedure, stimuli (coffee shop logos), and measures, were the same as in Experiment 1, with the only difference that participants were either asked to imagine being on a business trip in Bejing (China) or in Bogota (Colombia). All participants indicated correctly in which country their scenario was situated. Again, the evaluation and the willingness to buy measures were combined into a single evaluation measure (respective inter-item correlations .84 and .76, both $p < .001$).

3.2. Results and discussion

3.2.1. Evaluation

The repeated measures ANOVA revealed, as predicted, a significant main effect of imitation, $F(1, 36) = 5.97$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$, but no main effect of country, $F(1, 36) = 0.10$, $p = .76$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, and no significant interaction between imitation and country, $F(1, 36) = 0.03$, $p = .85$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$ (see Fig. 3). As predicted, simple effect tests showed for *both* uncertainty inducing countries (China and Colombia) that the copycat logo was evaluated more positively (M_{China} = 6.94, SD = 1.57; $M_{Colombia}$ = 6.98, SD = 1.25), than the visually differentiated logo (M_{China} = 6.03, SD = 1.63; $M_{Colombia}$ = 6.19, SD = 1.26), but these differences were marginally significant, $F(1, 36) = 3.28$, $p = .08$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$ and $F(1, 36) = 2.69$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, respectively.

3.2.2. Choice

A conditional logit regression showed additionally that, consistent with the results on evaluation, the main effect for imitation was significant, $\beta = .90$, $z = 2.51$, $p = .01$, whereas the interaction between imitation and country was not, $\beta = -.11$, $z = -0.02$, $p = .88$. Further analyses revealed that the probability to choose the coffee shop with the copycat logo was in both China and Colombia marginally higher (72% and 70% respectively) than the probability to choose the coffee shop with the no-similarity logo (28% and 30%), $\beta = .96$, $z = 1.82$, $p = .07$ for China and $\beta = 0.85$, $z = 1.74$, $p = .08$ for Colombia.

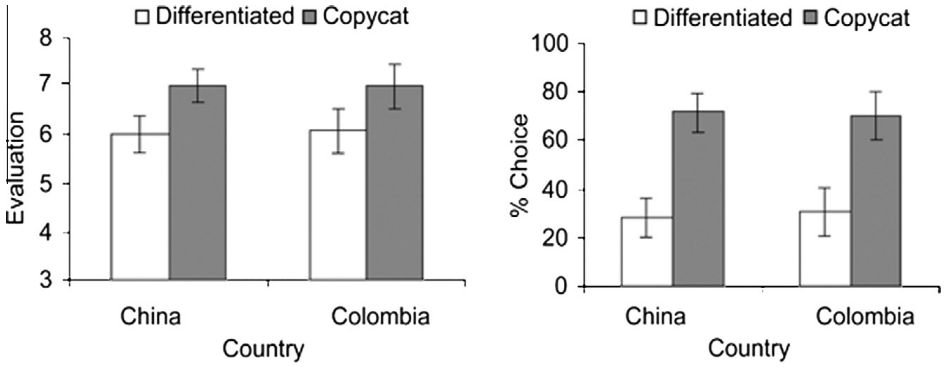


Fig. 3. Experiment 2: Influence of Imitation and Country (China versus Colombia) on Evaluation and Choice. *Note*: Error bars indicate ± one standard error of the mean.

Once more, the results demonstrate that when people feel uncertain about the general quality of products, which is prevalent in unfamiliar settings where people are unacquainted with the available brands, they prefer a copycat to a visually differentiated product. It once more shows a preference reversal for copycat brands due to uncertainty of quality. The results also rule out the alternative explanation that the positive evaluation of the copycat logo is due to a country/expertise effect. As predicted, it reveals instead that it is due to a copycat-effect.

Experiments 1 and 2 found that evaluation and choice of copycats is dependent on the context: When consumers feel uncertain about the quality of products, copycats are liked more, than when they feel certain. Yet, the experiments tested the effect of uncertainty on product evaluation only indirectly, by varying the decision context (country) and thus level of uncertainty about product quality. In Experiment 3, we manipulated uncertainty about product quality directly, to provide further support for the idea that uncertainty is the catalyst of the effect. Furthermore, Experiment 3 rules out another alternative explanation. Perhaps, the name USABUCKS in Experiments 1 and 2 signalled a different coffee preparation method (American style instead of Chinese or Colombian style), which might have led participants to choose the copycat. Experiment 3 addresses this issue by using a different product category and different brand names, none of them referring to a specific country. Furthermore, using a different product category generalizes the key findings.

4. Experiment 3

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and design

Fifty-five (31 men, age $M = 19.98$, $SD = 2.01$) paid Dutch undergraduate students were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (imitation: no, yes) × 2 (condition: uncertain, certain) mixed design, with imitation as within-participant factor and induction as between-participants factor. One foreign student was excluded from the analyses, leaving $N = 54$.

4.1.2. Stimuli

The product category energy drinks was chosen with Red Bull as the leader brand, as Red Bull has a strong reputation in the category, it is a well-known brand, and has a distinctive trade-dress. An existing copycat package (BULL FIGHTER) from

Fig. 4. Stimuli Used in Experiment 3.

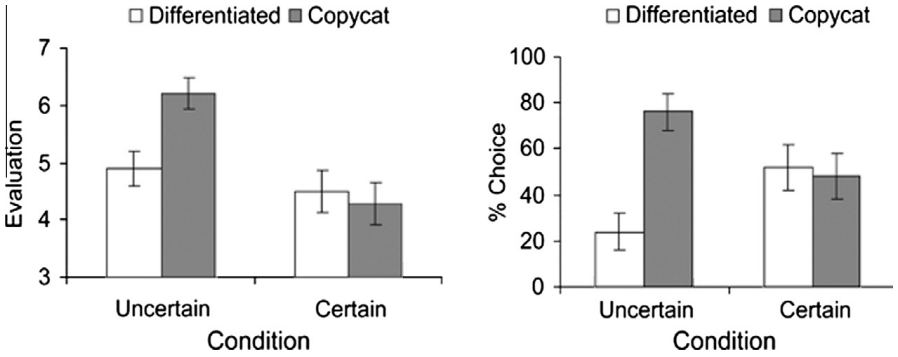


Fig. 5. Experiment 3: Influence of Imitation and Condition (Uncertain versus Certain) on Evaluation and Choice. *Note*: Error bars indicate ± one standard error of the mean.

the category energy drinks was selected together with a brand package that showed very little to almost no similarity to the Red Bull package (EMERGE, see Fig. 4). Both packages were unknown to the participants.

A pre-test with a separate sample of undergraduate students ($N = 33$, between-participants) established that the two packages differed in degree of similarity to the leader brand ($M_{Diff} = 2.13$, $SD = 1.46$, $M_{Copy} = 7.47$, $SD = 1.51$), $t(31) = -10.36$, $p < .001$, which is desirable. Participants indicated that the visually differentiated brand fitted less well in the product category "energy drinks" ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.53$), than the copycat brand did ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.87$), $t(31) = -2.24$, $p = .03$. Importantly, the two packages did not differ in overall (aesthetic) attractiveness ($M_{Diff} = 4.75$, $SD = 1.48$; $M_{Copy} = 4.76$, $SD = 1.95$, on a nine-point scale), $t(31) = -0.02$, $p = .98$.

4.1.3. Procedure and measures

General set up was the same as in Experiment 1 and 2. After familiarization with the different brands in the category "energy drinks", participants read a scenario. In the uncertainty (certainty) condition they imagined being in an unfamiliar (familiar) place, doing their shopping in a supermarket that was unknown (well known) to them. They read: "You do not know any of the brands (you know all the brands) that are sold in this supermarket. You are uncertain (certain) about the quality of the brands, as you do not know (know) what the good brands and what the bad brands are". A pre-test with a separate sample of undergraduate students ($N = 36$) had confirmed that participants in the uncertainty condition felt less certain about the quality of the products ($M = 1.72$, $SD = 0.75$), than participants in the certainty condition ($M = 8.22$, $SD = 0.73$), $t(34) = -26.28$, $p < .001$. The dependent variables were the same as in Experiment 1. The evaluation and willingness to buy measures were combined as before (respective inter-item correlations: .81 and .84, $ps < .001$).

4.2. Results and discussion

4.2.1. Evaluation

The repeated measures ANOVA revealed no main effect of imitation, $F(1, 52) = 2.69$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 52) = 13.36$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$, and, as predicted, a significant interaction between imitation and condition, $F(1, 52) = 5.10$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$ (see Fig. 5). Simple effect tests showed that, as predicted, the copycat was evaluated more positively when feeling uncertain ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.48$), than when feeling certain ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.82$), $F(1, 52) = 18.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .26$. When participants were uncertain about product quality they evaluated the copycat energy drink more positively, than the visually differentiated energy drink ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.70$) $F(1, 52) = 8.21$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. When participants were certain, the copycat was evaluated as positively as the visually differentiated brand ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.85$), $F(1, 52) = 0.18$, $p = .68$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$.

4.2.2. Choice

A conditional logit regression on choice also revealed the predicted significant interaction between imitation and condition, $\beta = -1.23$, $z = -2.08$, $p = .04$ (see Fig. 5). In the uncertainty condition the probability to choose the copycat was higher (76%) than the probability to choose the visually differentiated brand (24%), $\beta = 1.15$, $z = 2.64$, $p = .01$. In the certainty condition, the probability to choose the visually differentiated brand was as high as the probability to choose the copycat (52% and 48% respectively), $\beta = -.08$, $z = -0.20$, $p = .84$.

These findings provide further evidence that copycat evaluation is conditional on uncertainty of product quality. Copycats are evaluated more positively when people feel uncertain about product quality, than when feeling certain. Within the certain condition the copycat was evaluated as negative as the visually differentiated brand, but, inconsistent with Experiment 1, not more so. This result may be due to participants' liking of the visually differentiated product in the current study. The pre-test revealed that the particular package design of the visually differentiated energy drink did not fit very well in the intended product category. Possibly, unknown brands with unfamiliar package designs are only liked when fit is high and consumers feel certain enough to be willing to opt for something different and new (Campbell & Goodstein, 2001).

5. General discussion

Copycatting of leader brands is widespread, and it is important to understand when and why these practices are effective. Three experiments reveal that uncertainty of product quality prevalent in unfamiliar settings is a crucial condition that contributes to copycat judgment and decision-making. The experiments support the idea that whereas people like blatant copycats *less* when feeling certain, they like the same copycats *more* when feeling uncertain. This demonstrates the importance of the decision context on copycat evaluation. It shows that preferences for copycat brands are malleable and can reverse, conditional upon the experienced uncertainty.

The first experiment shows that when people are aware of the imitation strategy being used and feel certain about product quality (e.g., when being at home), a copycat is liked less and chosen less often than a visually differentiated product. This reverses, however, when being abroad and people feel uncertain about product quality. Then the same copycat is liked more and chosen more often than a visually differentiated product, despite equal levels of imitation-awareness. Thus, under these conditions people *knowingly* buy blatant copycats.

These effects are not due to source confusion, but actually originate from the very different role that imitation plays when people feel certain versus uncertain. The second experiment builds on this and ruled out that the effects are due to a country/expertise effect. Finally, the third experiment provided further support for the idea that preference for copycats is conditional on uncertainty, by means of manipulating uncertainty of product quality directly, instead of indirectly by varying the country in which evaluation takes place. In addition, it demonstrated the generalizability of the effect across product categories.

These results have implications for the copycatting literature and judgment and decision-making theory. The findings provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of an imitation strategy as they show that preferences for blatant copycats, rather than being generally negative, critically depend on the *context* in which the copycat is evaluated. When uncertainty about product quality is low, people like copycat brands less, than when uncertainty is high – despite awareness of the imitation tactics being used. The results do however not speak to the underlying process. Why would people like blatant copycats more when feeling uncertain?

Initial process evidence is provided by follow-up analyses that we conducted on data from the first experiment. After evaluation and choice, participants were first asked to indicate to which extent they thought the logos appeared familiar to them. Not surprisingly, the results revealed that, independent of condition (uncertain versus certain), the copycat logo appeared more familiar to participants ($M = 7.50$, $SD = 2.02$), than the visually differentiated logo did ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.87$), $F(1, 54) = 139.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .72$. A follow-up question in the experiment asked participants to indicate whether this familiar appearance felt good or bad. The interaction between imitation and condition was statistically significant, $F(1, 54) = 8.88$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. Simple effect tests showed that the familiar appearance of the blatant copycat felt *negative* when feeling certain about product quality (at home; $M = 5.23$, $SD = 2.30$), but that it felt *positive* when feeling uncertain (abroad; $M = 6.57$, $SD = 1.61$), $F(1, 54) = 6.45$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. The unfamiliar appearance of the visually differentiated logo felt positive when feeling certain about product quality (at home; $M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.34$), but it felt negative when feeling uncertain (abroad; $M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 54) = 5.48$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$.

To tests if "appraisal of familiarity" (whether the familiar appearance of the logo feels positive or negative) drives the results on evaluation, we estimated in addition a mediated moderation model using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). A regression analysis was conducted with (i) the nested variable imitation (visually differentiated (contrast-coded -1) versus copycat (1)), (ii) condition (uncertain (-1) versus certain (1)) and (iii) their interaction as predictors. The results demonstrated that the interaction between imitation and condition on the mediating variable appraisal of familiarity was, as before, significant ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 3.41$, $p < .001$). When the mediating variable was included in the full model, the results revealed a significant effect of this variable on evaluation ($\beta = .54$, $t = 8.36$, $p < .001$). Importantly however, the effect of the imitation X condition interaction was reduced and rendered nonsignificant ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.46$, $p = .15$). Bootstrapping analyses revealed that appraisal of familiarity indeed mediated the interaction between imitation and condition on evaluation, yielding a point estimate for the indirect effect of .29 and a 95% confidence interval of .13 to .48. This indicates that appraisal of familiarity statistically significantly mediated the joint effect of imitation and condition (uncertainty, certainty) on the evaluation of the logos.

The suggestion that the familiar appearance of the copycat can either feel good or bad depending on the context coincides with recent findings in the literature. Van Horen and Pieters (2012a, 21012b) and Steenkamp and Geyskens (submitted for publication) show that people dislike copycats when they are blatant and awareness of the used imitation tactics is high. Then, the familiar appearance of the package is interpreted as negative, as blatantly imitating a leader brand is perceived to be improper and unfair. However, the current results show that this is only the case when people are certain about product quality. When feeling uncertain, the warm glow of familiarity seems to compensate for "morality" (De Vries et al., 2010; Whittlesea, & Williams, 2001). Then, familiar feelings induced through package similarity are interpreted as positive, instead of negative. This comfort of familiarity overrides the readiness to penalize the copycat for the blatant imitation strategy being used, as occurs when feeling certain.

Future research is needed to analyze in detail whether this is indeed the underlying process determining copycat evaluation. Such research might try to manipulate the appraisal of familiarity directly instead of measuring it to unequivocally establish its effects. Fluent processing (and the accompanied feeling of familiarity) could be facilitated or hindered by manipulating objective features of the copycat, like goodness of form, symmetry, or figure-ground contrast. When processing is disfluent, the pattern should reverse and copycats should be disliked as much in uncertain as in certain decision contexts. Follow-up research might test this speculation.

The present research is, to our knowledge, the first to demonstrate that specific decision contexts critically determine copycat evaluation and choice. This indicates that choice of lookalike brands could be boosted by contextual factors, which underlines the importance of moving beyond package similarities and of incorporating the circumstances under which copycat evaluation takes place. We focused on the effect of uncertainty and investigated how a specific uncertainty-inducing situation – being abroad – affects preference for copycats. Exploration of other uncertainty-inducing situations is warranted. One, subtler, situation that is likely to induce different levels of uncertainty is store-type (e.g., discount versus high-end stores). The store's layout, the assortment, and the price level can influence the uncertainty perceived about the overall quality of products sold in the store (Dowling & Staelin, 1994). In comparison to high-end stores, the quality of the product range at discount stores is more variable, and perhaps lower which should fuel consumers' feelings of uncertainty. The pervasiveness of brand copycatting in discounters, in developing countries and upcoming markets may at least in part be playing on feelings of uncertainty.

Future research could further examine whether blatant imitation (i.e., where imitation attempts are obvious) is a prerequisite for the obtained effects, or whether the same results will be acquired when the product is highly similar (i.e., high overlap of features), but is not perceived as blatant. Often, blatant imitation and high similarity co-occur. However, recent research points to the direction that a high overlap of features is not a necessary precondition for negative copycat evaluation to occur, as long as the imitation attempt is perceived to be obvious. A product imitating only one or two salient features (low similarity) that were exclusively associated with the imitated brand (i.e., the color purple of the Milka package), was evaluated more negatively and chosen less often, than a product that showed high featural overlap (high similarity), by imitating many features that were not exclusively associated with the imitated brand (i.e., the theme "Alpine freshness" displayed on the package design; Van Horen & Pieters, 2012b). This research indicates that awareness of obvious imitation attempts, but not high similarity per se, results in a negative evaluation of the copycat.

As the current research focused on evaluation and choice in simulated situations, where people imagined having to make a specific choice, future research could investigate whether these hypothetical choices transfer to actual choices, as intentions need not transfer to actual behavior (Sheeran, 2002). Such research may build on the current findings that blatant copycats are effective when people are uncertain and helps us to understand why we are likely to buy a copycat – and not an equally attractive-looking other brand – on our next holiday abroad.

References

Bornstein, R. F. (1989). Exposure and affect: Overview and meta-analysis of research, 1968–1987. *Psychological Bulletin, 106*, 265–289. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.2.265.

Campbell, M. C., & Goodstein, R. C. (2001). The moderating effect of perceived risk on consumers' evaluations of product incongruity: Preference for the norm. *Journal of Consumer Research, 28*(3), 439–449. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/323731.

Campbell, M. C., & Kirmani, A. (2000). Consumers' use of persuasion knowledge: The effects of accessibility and cognitive capacity on perceptions of an influence agent. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27*(1), 69–83. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/314309.

Collins-Dodd, C., & Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1999). National brand responses to brand imitation: Retailers versus other manufacturers. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 8*(2), 96–105. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10610429910266940.

Dawar, N., & Parker, P. (1994). Marketing universals: Consumers' use of brand name, price, physical appearance, and retailer reputation as signals of product quality. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(2), 81–95. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1252271.

De Vries, M., Holland, R. W., Chenier, T., Starr, M. J., & Winkielman, P. (2010). Happiness cools the warm glow of familiarity: Psychophysiological evidence that mood modulates the familiarity-affect link. *Psychological Science, 21*(3), 321–328. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797609359878.

Dodds, W. B., Monroe, K. B., & Grewal, D. (1991). Effects of price, brand, and store information on buyers' product evaluations. *Journal of Marketing Research, 28*(3), 307–319. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3172866.

Dowling, G. R., & Staelin, R. (1994). A model of perceived risk and intended risk-handling activity. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*(1), 119–134. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209386.

Downey, H. K., & Slocum, J. W. (1975). Uncertainty: Measures, research, and sources of variation. *Academy of Management Journal, 18*(3), 562–578. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/255685.

Foxman, E. R., Muehling, D. D., & Berger, P. W. (1990). An investigation of factors contributing to consumer brand confusion. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs, 24*(1), 170–189. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6606.1990.tb00264.x.

Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research, 21*(1), 1–31. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209380.

Hayes, A. F. (2013). *An introduction to media-tion, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York: Guilford Press. <http://www.guilford.com/>.

Howard, D. J., Kerin, R. A., & Gengler, C. (2000). The effects of brand name similarity on brand source confusion: Implications for trademark infringement. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 19*(2), 250–264. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jppm.19.2.250.17131.

Howell, W. C., & Burnett, S. A. (1978). Uncertainty measurement: A cognitive taxonomy. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 22*(1), 45–68. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(78)90004-1.

Huber, J., Payne, J. W., & Puto, C. (1982). Adding asymmetrically dominated alternatives: Violations of regularity and the similarity hypothesis. *Journal of Consumer Research, 9*(1), 90–98. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/208899.

Jacoby, L. L., Kelley, C. M., Brown, J., & Jasechko, J. (1989). Becoming famous overnight: Limits on the ability to avoid unconscious influences of the past. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*(3), 326–338. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.56.3.326.

Jacoby, L. L., Kelley, C. M., & Dywan, J. (1989). Memory attributions. In H. L. Roediger & F. I. M. Craik (Eds.), *Varieties of memory and consciousness: Essays in honour of Endel Tulving* (pp. 391–422). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1982). Variants of uncertainty. *Cognition, 11*, 143–157. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(82)90023-3.

Kapferer, J. N. (1995). Brand confusion: Empirical study of a legal concept. *Psychology and Marketing, 12*(6), 551–569. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220120607.

Kirmani, A., & Rao, A. R. (2000). No pain, no gain: A critical review of the literature on signaling unobservable product quality. *Journal of Marketing, 64*(2), 66–79. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.64.2.66.18000.

Lipshitz, R., & Strauss, O. (1997). Coping with uncertainty: A naturalistic decision-making analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process, 69*(2), 149–163. http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/obhd.1997.2679.

Litt, A., Reich, T., Maymin, S., & Shiv, B. (2011). Pressure and perverse flights to familiarity. *Psychological Science, 22*(4), 523–531. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797611400095.
Loewenstein, G. (1994). The psychology of curiosity: A review and reinterpretation. *Psychological Bulletin, 116*(1), 75–98. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.116.1.75.
Loken, B., Ross, I., & Hinkle, R. L. (1986). Consumer "confusion" of origin and brand similarity perceptions. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 5*, 195–211.
Long, S. (1997). *Regression models for categorical and limited dependent variables*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Martin, L. L. (1986). Set/reset: Use and disuse of concepts in impression formation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*(3), 493–504. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.3.493.
Meloy, M. G., & Russo, J. E. (2004). Binary choice under instructions to select versus reject. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 93*(2), 114–128. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2003.12.002.
Mitchell, V. W., & Kearney, I. (2002). A critique of legal measures of brand confusion. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management, 11*(6), 357–379. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10610420210445497.
Moreland, R. L., & Zajonc, R. B. (1982). Exposure effects in person perception: Familiarity, similarity, and attraction. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 18*(5), 395–415. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(82)90062-2.
Muthukrishnan, A. V., Wathieu, L., & Xu, A. J. (2009). Ambiguity aversion and the preference for established brands. *Management Science, 55*(12), 1933–1941. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.1090.1087.
Ross, W. T., & Creyer, E. H. (1992). Making inferences about missing information: The effects of existing information. *Journal of Consumer Research, 19*(1), 14–25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209282.
Sayman, S., Hoch, S. J., & Raju, J. S. (2002). Positioning of store brands. *Marketing Science, 21*(4), 378–397. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mksc.21.4.378.134.
Schwarz, N. (2004). Metacognitive experiences in consumer judgment and decision making. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*(4), 332–348. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1404_2.
Scott-Morton, F., & Zettelmeyer, F. (2004). The strategic positioning of store brands in retailer – Manufacturer negotiations. *Review of Industrial Organization, 24*(2), 161–194. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.227926.
Sheeran, P. (2002). Intention—behavior relations: A conceptual and empirical review. *European Review of Social Psychology, 12*(1), 1–36. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14792772143000003.
Simonson, I. (1994). Trademark infringement from the buyer perspective: Conceptual analysis and measurement implications. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 13*(2), 181–199.
Steenkamp, J. -B. E. M., & Geyskens, I. (2013) Global generalizations on drivers of store brand share. *Marketing Science*, in press.
Urbany, J. E., Dickson, P. R., & Wilkie, W. L. (1989). Buyer uncertainty and information search. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16*(2), 208–215. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209209.
Van Horen, F., & Pieters, R. (2012a). When high similarity copycats lose and moderate similarity copycats gain: The impact of comparative evaluation. *Journal of Marketing Research, 49*, 83–91. http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmr.08.0405.
Van Horen, F., & Pieters, R. (2012b). Consumer evaluation of copycat brands: The effect of imitation type. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 29*, 246–255. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2012.04.001.
Ward, J., Loken, B., Ross, I., & Hasapopoulos, T. (1986). The influence of physical similarity on generalization of affect and attribute perceptions from national brands to private label brands. In T. Schimp, S. Sharma, W. Dillan, R. T. Dyer, M. Gardner, G. J. et al. (Eds.), *American educator's proceedings* (Vol. 52, pp. 51–56). Chicago, II: American Marketing Association.
Warlop, L., & Alba, J. W. (2004). Sincere flattery: Trade-dress imitation and consumer choice. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 14*(1&2), 21–27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1401&2_4.
Wegener, D. T., & Petty, R. E. (1995). Flexible correction processes in social judgment: The role of naive theories in corrections for perceived bias. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 36–51. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.68.1.36.
Whittlesea, B. W. A. (1993). Illusions of familiarity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 19*(6), 1235–1253. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.19.6.1235.
Whittlesea, B. W. A., & Williams, L. D. (2001). The discrepancy-attribution hypothesis: II. Expectation, uncertainty, surprise, and feelings of familiarity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition, 27*(1), 14–33. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.27.1.14.
Winkielman, P., Schwarz, N., Fazendeiro, T. A., & Reber, R. (2003). The hedonic marking of processing fluency: Implications for evaluative judgment. In J. Musch & K. C. Klauer (Eds.), *The psychology of evaluation: Affective processes in cognition and emotion* (pp. 189–217). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
Zaichkowsky, J. L. (2006). *The psychology behind trademark infringement and counterfeiting*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc..
Zajonc, R. B. (1968). Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 9*(2), 1–27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0025848.